

**ON SCRIPTURE**

**A PROLOGUE OR PREFACE  
TO THE  
GREAT BIBLE**

**AND**

**A FRUITFUL EXHORTATION  
TO THE  
READING OF HOLY  
SCRIPTURE**

**THOMAS CRANMER,  
ARCHBISHOP OF CANTERBURY**

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Transcription of ‘A Prologue or Preface...’ via the Internet Archive, drawn from the second edition of the Great Bible, *The Byble in Englyshe*, (London: Edward Whitchurch, 1540).

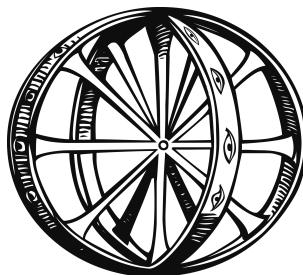
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Transcription of ‘A Fruitful Exhortation...’ from *Certain sermons or homilies appointed to be read in churches* (London: Richard Grafton, 1551).

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‘Prologue or Preface...’ and ‘A Fruitful Exhortation...’  
set in JSL Blackletter (with JSL Ancient)  
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Modern English set in Scala  
Title set in Hesse Antiqua



Oxford: Quadriga, 2019



*A reader who attends to the archaic versions in the left-hand column of the following texts will quickly observe that the practices of orthography, abbreviation, and punctuation in the sixteenth century seem startlingly capricious to a modern eye. The ‘Prologue’ and ‘Exhortation’ show the abbreviated forms of ‘thee,’ ‘that,’ and several other words made by placing an identifying letter over the first letter of the word (shown here by the use of a superscript), with a ‘ȝ’ substituting for the Middle English ‘þ’; the abbreviated forms of ‘vowel + nasal consonant’ made by a bar like a tilde over the vowel (here reproduced with a tilde or circumflex, depending on what the typeface makes available); the near interchangeability of ‘i’ and ‘ȝ’; the use of ‘long s’ and ‘ragged r’ in typography; and fluid, inconsistent spellings of even plain and familiar words.*

*Note also that different editions show variation not only in spelling and punctuation, but sometimes also in the choice of the words themselves.*

# The prologue,

¶ A prologue or preface made by the  
moost reuerende father in God, Thomas  
Archbyshop of Canterbury  
Metropolitan and Prymate of Englande.

For two sondrye sortes of people it semeth moche necessary that somthyng  
be sayde in the entrye of thys booke, by the waye of a preface or prologue:  
wherby herafter it maye be both y<sup>e</sup> better accepted of them which hitherto  
coulde not well beare it: & also the better vsed of them, which heretofore haue  
mysused it. For truly, some there are that be to slowe, and nede the spurre:  
some other seme to quycke, & nede more of the brydell. Some loose theyz  
game by shorte shotynge, some by ouer shotynge. Some walke to moche on  
the leste hande, some to moche on the ryght. In the former sorte be all they  
that refuse to reade, or to heare redde the scripture in theyz vulgar tonges,  
moch worse they that also let, or discourage the other from the readyng or  
bearyng thereof. In the latter sorte be they, whiche by theyz inordinate  
readyng, vndiscrete speakyng, contentious disputyng, or otherwyse, by  
theyz licencynous lyuyng, slauder and hynder the worde of God, mooste of  
all other, wherof they wolde seme to be greatest furtherers. These two  
sortes albeit they be moost farre vnylike the one to the other, yet they both  
deserue in effecte lyke reproche. Neþher can I well tell whyþher of them  
I may iudge the more offender, hym that doth obstinately refuse so godlye  
and goodly knowledge: or hym that so ungodly and so ungodly doth abuse  
the same: And as touchyng the former I wolde maruayle moche that any  
man shulde be so madde, as to refuse in darcknes, lyght; in honger, foode; in  
colde, fyer; for the worde of God is lyght: Lucerna pedibus meis, verbum

# The Prologue,

¶A prologue or preface made by the  
most reverend father in God, Thomas  
Archbishop of Canterbury,  
Metropolitan and Primate of England

For two sundry sorts of people, it seemeth much necessary that something be said in the entry of this book by the way of a preface or prologue: whereby hereafter it may be both the better accepted of them which hitherto could not well bear it: and also the better used of them, which heretofore have misused it. For truly, some there are that be too slow and need the spur; some other seem too quick, and need more of the bridle. Some lose their game by short shooting, some by overshooting. Some walk too much on the left hand, some too much on the right. In the former sort be all they that refuse to read or to hear read the scripture in their vulgar tongues; much worse, they that also let or discourage the other from the reading or hearing thereof. In the latter sort be they which by their inordinate reading, indiscrete speaking, contentious disputing, or otherwise by their licentious living, slander and hinder the word of God most of all other, whereof they would seem to be greatest furtherers. These two sorts, albeit they be most far unlike the one to the other, yet they both deserve in effect like reproach. Neither can I well tell whyther of them I may judge the more offender, him that doth obstinately refuse so godly and goodly knowledge, or him that so ungodly and so ungodly doth abuse the same. And as touching the former, I would marvel much that any man should be so mad, as to refuse in darkness, light; in hunger, food; in cold, fire. For the word of God is light: *Lucerna pedibus meis, verbum*

tuum. Foode: Non in solo pane vinit homo, sed in omni verbo dei. Fyer: Ignem veni mittere in terram, et quid volo, nisi ut ardeat? I wolde maruayle (I saye at thys) saue that I consyder, howe moche custome and vsage maye do. So that ys there were a people as some wryte, de Cymerius, which never sawe the sunne, by reason that they be situated farre towarde the north pole, and be enclosed and ouershadowed with hygh mountaynes: it is credyble and lyke ynough, that ys, by the power and will of God, the mountaynes shulde synke downe, and geue place, that the lyght of the sunne might haue enteraunce to them: at the fyrt, some of them wolde be offendeth therwith. And the olde proverbe affermeth, that after tyllage of corne was fyrt founde: many delyted more to feade of maste and acornes, wherwith they had ben accustomed, then to eate bread made of good corne. Soche is the nature of custome that it causeth vs to beare all thynges well and easelye, wherwith we haue bene accustomed, and to be offendeth with all thynges therunto contrary. And therfore, I can well thynke them worthy pardon, whych at the comyng abroade of scripture doubted and drewe backe. But such as wyll persyste styl in theyr wylfulness, I muste nedes iudge, not onely foolyshe, frowarde and obstinate: but also peuysshe, peruerse and indurate. And yet, ys the matter shulde be tryed by custome, we myght also allege custome for the readyng of the scripture in the vulgare tonge, and prescribe the more auncient custome. For it is not moche aboue one hundred yeare agoo, sens scripture hath not bene accustomed to be redde in the vulgar tonge within this realme, and many hundred yeares before that, it was translated & redd in the Saxonnes tonge, which at that tyme was oure mothers tonge. Wherof there remayneth yet diuers copyes fownde lately in olde abbeis, of soch antique maners of writynge and speaking, that fewe men

*tuum.*<sup>1</sup> Food: *Non in solo pane viuit homo, sed in omni verbo dei.*<sup>2</sup> Fire: *Ignem veni mittere in terram, & quid volo nisi vt ardeat?*<sup>3</sup> I would marvel (I say at this) save that I consider how much custom and usage may do. So that if there were a people as some write, *de Cymeriis*,<sup>4</sup> which never saw the sun, by reason that they be situated far toward the North Pole, and be enclosed and overshadowed with high mountains, it is credible and like enough, that if by the power and will of God, the mountains should sink down and give place, that the light of the sun might have entrance to them: at the first some of them would be offended therewith. And the old proverb affirmeth, that after tillage of corn was first found, many delighted more to feed of mast and acorns, wherewith they had been accustomed, than to eat bread made of good corn. Such is the nature of custom, that it causeth us to bear all things well and easily, wherewith we have been accustomed, and to be offended with all things thereunto contrary. And therefore, I can well think them worthy pardon, which at the coming abroad of scripture doubted and drew back. But such as will persist still in their wilfulness, I must needs judge not only foolish, foward\* and obstinate, but also peevish, perverse, and indurate†. And yet, if the matter should be tried by custom, we might also allege custom for the reading of the scripture in the vulgar tongue, and prescribe the more ancient custom. For it is not much above one hundred years ago, since scripture hath not been accustomed to be read in the vulgar tongue within this realm, and many hundred years before that, it was translated and read in the Saxons' tongue, which at that time was our mother tongue. Whereof there remaineth yet divers copies found lately in old abbeys, of such antique manners of writing and speaking, that few men

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1. ‘Thy word is a lamp unto my feet’, Ps 119:105.

2. ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God’ Dt 8:3.

3. ‘I am come to cast fire on the earth. And what will I, but that it be kindled?’, Lk 12:49.

4. ‘Of the Cimmerians’

nolwe ben able to reade and understande the. And when this language waxed olde and out of comen vsage, because folke shulde not lacke the frute of readyng, it was agayne translated in the newer language. Wherof yet also many copies remayne and be dayly founde. But nolwe to lett passe custome, and to weye as wyse men euer shulde, the thyng in hys awne nature. Let vs here discusse, What it auayleth scripture to be had and redde of the lay and vulgare people. And to this question I entende here to saye nothyng: but that was spoken and wrytten by the noble doctoure and moost morall diuine saynt John Chisostome, in hys thyrde sermon de Lazaro: albeit; I wyl be somthyng shorther, and gether the matter into swifter wordes and lesse rowme the he doth there: because I wolde not be tedious. He exhorteth there hys audience, that every man shulde reade by him selfe at home in the meane dayes and tyme, betwene sermon and sermon: to the entente they myght both more profoundely syre in their myndes and memorie that he had sayde before upon soch textes, wherupon he had alreadye preached: and also that they myght haue theyr myndes the more ready and better prepared to receyue and perceave that which he shulde say frome thensorth in hys sermones, upo soche textes, as he had not yet declared and preached upon: therfore sayth he there: My comen vsage is to geue you warnynge before, what matter I intende after to entreate vpon, y<sup>e</sup> you youre selues in the meane dayes maye take the boke in hande, reade, weye, and perceyue the summe and effect of the mattier: and marke what hath bene declared, and what remayneth yet to be declared: so y<sup>e</sup> therby youre mynde maye be the more furnyshed, to here the reste, that shal be sayde. And that I exhorte you (sayth he) and euer haue & wyl exhorte you, y<sup>e</sup> ye (not only here in the churche) geue eare to that, that is sayde by the preacher: but that also, when ye be at home in youre houses, ye applye youre selues from tyme to tyme to the readyng of the holy scriptures: which thyng also I neuerlynne to beate into the eares of them that bene

now be able to read and understand them. And when this language waxed old and out of common usage, because folk should not lack the fruit of reading, it was again translated into the newer language. Whereof yet also many copies remain and be daily found. But now to let pass custom, and to weigh as wise men ever should the thing in his own nature. Let us here discuss, What it availeth scripture to be had and read of the lay and vulgar people. And to this question I intend here to say nothing: but that was spoken and written by the noble doctor and most moral divine, saint John Chrysostom in his third sermon *de Lazaro*<sup>1</sup>; albeit, I will be something shorter, and gather the matter into fewer words and less room than he doth there, because I would not be tedious. He exhorteth there his audience, that every man should read by himself at home in the mean days and time, between sermon and sermon: to the intent they might both more profoundly fix in their minds and memories that he had said before upon such texts, whereupon he had already preached: and also that they might have their minds the more ready and better prepared to receive and perceive that which he should say from thenceforth in his sermons, upon such texts, as he had not yet declared and preached upon: therefore saith he there, My common usage is to give you warning before, what matter I intend after to entreat upon, that you yourselves in the mean days may take the book in hand, read, weigh, and perceive the sum and effect of the matter; and mark what hath been declared and what remaineth yet to be declared; so that thereby your mind may be the more furnished to hear the rest that shall be said. And that I exhort you (saith he) and ever have and will exhort you, that ye (not only here in the church) give ear to that, that is said by the preacher; but that also when ye be at home in your houses, ye apply yourselves from time to time to the reading of the holy scriptures, which thing also I never lin<sup>2</sup> to beat into the ears of them that be

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1. ‘On Lazarus,’ in seven discourses.

2. lin: *to cease, to stop from*

my famyliers, and with whom I have p̄zvuate aquayntaunce and conuersacyon. Lett no man make excuse and saye: (sayeth he) I am busyd aboute mattiers of the comon welth, I beare this office or y<sup>t</sup>, I am a craftes man, I must applye myne occupacyon, I haue a wyse, my chyldren must be fedde, my householde must I prouyde for. Brefly I am a man of the wrold, it is not for me to reade the scriptures, that belogeth to the that hath bedden the wrold sayre well, whiche lyue in solitarenes and contemplatyon, that hath bene brought up, and contynually nosyllid in learnynge and religyon. To thys answering: what sayest thou man (sayeth he) is it not for the to studye and to reade the scripture, because thou art encōbred and distracte with cures and busynes? So moch the more it is behouefull for the to haue defensē of scriptures, hōwe moche thou art the more distressed in worldey daungers. They that bene free and farre from trouble and entremedlyng of worldey thinges, lyueth in sauergarde and tranquylite, and in the calme or within a sure haven. Thou art in the myddest of the see of worldey wickednesse, and therfore thou nedest the more of ghostlye succoure and comfort: they sytte farre from the strokes of battayll, and farre out of gonnehoure, and therfore they be but seldomē wounded: thou y<sup>t</sup> standest in the forefronte of the hoost, and nyest to thyne enemyes, muste nedes take nowe and then many strokes, and be greuously wounded. And therfore thou hast more nede to haue thy remedyes and medecynes at hande. Thy wyse prouoketh the to anger, thy chylde gyueth the occasyon to take sorowe and pensyuenes, thyne enemyes lyeth in wayte for the, thy frende (as thou takest him) somtyme enuyeth the, thy neyghbouryste mystrepteth the, or pycketh quarels agaynst the, thy mate or partyner undermyneth the, thy lordē iudge, or iustycē threteneth the, pouertye is paynfull to the, the losse of thy deare and welbeloued causeth the to morne. Prosperite exalteth the, aduersyte bryngeth the lowe. Breflye, so diuise and so manyfolde occasyonis of cares, tribulacyonis and temptacions

my familiars, and with whom I have private acquaintance and conversation. Let no man make excuse and say (saith he): I am busied about matters of the common wealth; I bear this office, or that; I am a craftsman, I must apply my occupation, I have a wife, my children must be fed, my household must I provide for. Briefly, I am a man of the world, it is not for me to read the scriptures, that belongeth to them that have bidden the world farewell, which live in solitariness and contemplation, and have been brought up and continually nosylded<sup>1</sup> in learning and religion. To this answering: What sayest thou man? (saith he) Is it not for thee to study and to read the scripture, because thou art encumbered and distracted with cares and business? So much the more it is behoveful for thee to have defense of scriptures, how much thou art the more distressed in worldly dangers. They that be free and far from trouble and intermeddling of worldly things liveth in safeguard and tranquility, and in the calm or within a sure haven. Thou art in the midst of the sea of worldly wickedness, and therefore thou needest the more of ghostly<sup>2</sup> succor and comfort! They sit far from the strokes of battle, and far out of gunshot, and therefore they be but seldom wounded: thou that standest in the forefront of the host, and nighest to thine enemies, must needs take now and then many strokes, and be grievously wounded. And therefore thou hast most need to have thy remedies and medicines at hand. Thy wife provoketh thee to anger, thy child giveth thee occasion to take sorrow and pensiveness, thine enemies lie in wait for thee, thy friend (as thou takest him) sometime envieth thee, thy neighbor misreporteth thee, or picketh quarrels against thee, thy mate or partner undermineth thee, thy lord judge, or justice, threateneth thee, poverty is painful to thee, the loss of thy dear and well-beloved causeth thee to mourn. Prosperity exalteth thee, adversity bringeth thee low. Briefly, so divers and so manifold occasions of cares, tribulations and temptations

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<sup>1.</sup> nosylded: *nurtured, raised*

<sup>2.</sup> ghostly: *spiritual*

besetteth the and besegeth the rounde aboute. Where canst thou haue armoure or forteresse agaynst thyne assautes? Where canst thou haue salue for thy sores, but of holy scripture? Thy fleshe must nedes be prone and subiect to fleshly lustes, which dayly walkest and art conuersaunte amongst women, seyst theyz bewtyes, set forth to the eye, hearest theyz nyse and waton wordes, smeltest their balme, cyuet and muske, with many other lyke prouocations and steringes, except thou hast in a redynes wherwith to supprese and auoyde them, which cannot elles where be had, but onely out of the holy scriptures. Lett vs reade and seke all the remedyes that we can, and all shal be lytell ynough. Howe shall we then do, yf we suffer and take dayly woudes, and whā we haue done, wyll sytte still and serche for no medecynes? Doest thou not marke and consider, howe the smyth, mason, or carpenter, or any other handy craftesma, what neade so euer he be in, what other shyfte soeuer he make, he wyll not sell or laye to pledge the toles of hys occupacyon, for then howe shulde he worke his feate or get his lyuinge therby? Of lyke mynde and affeccyon ought we to be towardes holye scripture, for as mallettes, hammars, sawes, chesylles, ares, and hatchettes, be the tooles of theyr occupacyon. So bene the bookes of the prophetes, and apostelles, and all holye wryte inspired by the holye ghost, the instrumentes of oure saluacyon. Wherfore, let us not sycke to bye and prouyde vs the Byble, that is to saye, the bookees of holy scripture. And lett us thynke that to be a better Juell in our house then eyther golde or syluer. For lyke as theues bene lothe to assaulte an house, where they knowe to be good armoure and artillary, so wheresoeuer these holye and ghostly bookees bene occupied, there nether the deuell, nor none of his angelles dare come neare: And they that occupye them bene in moche sauegarde, and hauen greate consolacyon, and bene the readyer vnto all goodnes, the fower to all euyll, and yf they haue done any thing amysē, anone euuen by the syght of

besetteth thee and besiegeth thee round about. Where canst thou have armour or fortress against thine assaults? Where canst thou have salves for thy sores but of holy scripture? Thy flesh must needs be prone and subject to fleshly lusts, which daily walkest and art conversant amongst women, seest their beauties set forth to the eye, hearest their nice and wanton words, smellest their balm, civet and musk, with many other like provocations and stirrings, except thou hast in readiness wherewith to suppress and avoid them, which cannot elsewhere be had, but only out of the holy scriptures. Let us read and seek all the remedies that we can, and all shall be little enough. How shall we then do, if we suffer and take daily wounds, and when we have done, will sit still and search for no medicines? Dost thou not mark and consider how the smith, mason, or carpenter, or any other handy craftsman, what need soever he be in, what other shift<sup>1</sup> soever he make, he will not sell nor lay to pledge the tools of his occupation, for then how should he work hisfeat or get his living thereby? Of like mind and affection ought we to be towards holy scripture, for as mallets, hammers, saws, chisels, axes, and hatchets be the tools of their occupation. So be the books of the prophets, and apostles, and all holy writ inspired by the holy ghost, the instruments of our salvation. Wherefore let us not stick<sup>2</sup> to buy and provide us the Bible, that is to say, the books of holy scripture. And let us think that to be a better jewel in our house than either gold or silver. For like as thieves be loath to assault an house where they know to be good armour and artillery, so wheresoever these holy and ghostly books be occupied, there neither the devil nor none of his angels dare come near. And they that occupy them be in much safeguard, and have a great consolation, and be the readier unto all goodness, the slower to all evil, and if they have done anything amiss, anon even by the sight of

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<sup>1</sup> shift: *means of accomplishing something*

<sup>2</sup> stick: *balk, scruple*

the bookeſ theyz conſciences bene admoniſhed, and they warden ſorȝ & aſhamed of the facte. Paradiuenture, they will ſaie unto me: hōwe and yf we underſtande nott that we reade, that iſ conteyned in the bokes. What then? Suppose, thou underſtande not the depe and proſoude miſteryes of ſcriptures, yet can it not be, but that moche frute and holynes muſt come and growe unto the by the reading: for it cannot be that thou ſhuldest be ignoraunte in all thinges alyke. For the hōlye ghost hath ſo ordered and attempered the ſcriptures, that in them aſwell publicanes, fyſhers, and ſhepherdes may fynde theyz edyfication, as greate doctoures theyz erudityon: for thoſe bookeſ were not made to vayne glorie, lyke as were the wrytinges of the gentyle philofphers and rethoriciyans, to the entent the makers ſhulde be hadd in admiration for theyz hys ſtyles and obſcure maner of wrytinge, wherof nothyng can be underſtande without a master or an expositoure. But the apotleſ and prophetes wrote theyz bokes ſo, that theyz ſpeciall entent and purpose might be underſtanded and perceaued of euery reader, which was nothing but the edifacyon and amendemente of the lyfe of them that readeth or heareth it. Who iſ it that reading or hearing reade in the goſpell, Blessed are they that bene meke. Blessed are they that bene mercyfull. Blessed are they that bene of cleane herte: and ſoþ other lyke places, can perceyue nothing excepte he haue a master to teache hym what it meaneth? Likewyſe, the ſigneſ and myracleſ with all other hystoryeſ of the doynges of Chriſt or hys apotleſ, who iſ ther, of ſo ſimple witte and capacite, but he maye be able to perceau and underſtande them? Theſe be but excuses and clokes for the rayne, and keueryngeſ of theyz awne ydell ſlouthfulnes, I canot underſtande it. What maruaylle? Hōwe ſhuldest thou underſtande, yf thou wylt not reade, nor loke vpō it? take the bookeſ into thyne handeſ, reade the hole ſtorye, and that thou underſtandest kepe it well in memorye: that thou underſtandest not, reade it agayne and agayne: yf thou can nether ſo come by it, counſaylle with ſome other that iſ better learned. Go to thy curate and preacher, ſhewe thy

the books their consciences be admonished, and they wax sorry and ashamed of the fact. Peradventure, they will say unto me: how and if we understand not that we read, that is contained in the books. What then? Suppose thou understand not the deep and profound mysteries of scriptures, yet can it not be, but that much fruit and holiness must come and grow unto thee by the reading: for it cannot be that thou shouldest be ignorant in all things alike. For the holy ghost hath so ordered and attempered the scriptures, that in them as well publicans, fishers, and shepherds may find their edification, as great doctors their erudition: for those books were not made to vain glory, like as were the writings of the gentile philosophers and rhetoricians, to the intent the makers should be had in admiration for their high styles and obscure manner of writing, whereof nothing can be understood without a master or an expositor. But the apostles and prophets wrote their books so, that their special intent and purpose might be understood and perceived of every reader, which was nothing but the edification and amendment of the life of them that readeth or heareth it. Who is it, that reading or hearing read in the gospel, Blessed are they that be meek. Blessed are they that be merciful. Blessed are they that be of clean heart. and such other like places, can perceive nothing except he have a master to teach him what it meaneth? Likewise, the signs and miracles with all other histories of the doings of Christ or his apostles, who is there, of so simple wit and capacity, but he may be able to perceive and understand them? These be but excuses and cloaks for the rain, and coverings of their own idle slothfulness. I cannot understand it. What marvel? How shouldest thou understand, if thou wilt not read, nor look upon it? Take the books into thine hands, read the whole story, and that thou understandest, keep it well in memory; that thou understandest not, read it again, and again. If thou can neither so come by it, counsel with some other that is better learned. Go to thy curate and preacher; show thy-

selke to be desirous to knowe and learne. And I doubte not, but God seyng  
thy diligence and redynesse (ys no man elles teache the) wyll hym selke  
wouchsafle w<sup>t</sup> hys holy sprete to illuminate the, and to open vnto the that  
which was locked from the.

Remēber the Cnnuchus of Candace quene of Ethioppe, which albeit he  
was a man of a wylde and barbarous countrey, and one occupyped with  
worldly cures and busynesses, yet rydyng in his charet, he was readyng  
the scripture. Now consider, ys thys man passyng in hys iorney, was so  
diligent as to reade the scripture, what thinkest thou of like was he wōte to  
do sittynge at home? Agayne, he that letted not to reade, albeit he dyd not  
vnderstande, What dyd he then, trowest thou, after that when he had  
learned and had gotten vnderstanding? For that thou maye well knowe  
that he vnderstode not what he reade: herken what Philippe there sayth  
vnto hym. Understantest thou what thou readest? And he nothynge  
ashamed to confesse his ignoraunce, answereth: Howe shulde I vnderstande  
hauyng no body to shewe me the wey? Lo when he lacked one to shewe  
hym the weye and to expounide to hym the scriptures, yet dyd he reade: and  
therfore God the rather prouyded for hym a gyde of the wey, that taught  
hym to vnderstande it. God perceyued his wyllinge and towarde mynde:  
and therfore he sent hym a teacher by and by. Therfore, let no man be  
negligēt about hys awne health and saluation: though thou haue not  
Philippe allwayes when thou woldest, the holy ghost, which then moued  
and stered vp Philippe, wil be ready and not faile the ys thou do thy  
diligence accordingly. All these thinges bene witten for vs to oure  
edifycatio and amendement, which be boorne towardes the latter ende of the  
worlde. The readyng of scriptures is a greate and strong bulwarke or  
forteresse against synne, the ignoraunce of the same is the greater ruyne and  
destruccyon of them that will not knowe it. That is the thing that

self to be desirous to know and learn. And I doubt not, but God seeing thy diligence and readiness (if no man else teach thee) will himself vouchsafe with his holy spirit to illuminate thee, and to open unto thee that which was locked from thee.

Remember the Eunuch of Candace, queen of Ethiopia, which albeit he was a man of a wild and barbarous country, and one occupied with worldly cares and businesses, yet riding in his chariot, he was reading the scripture. Now consider, if this man passing in his journey, was so diligent as to read the scripture, what thinkest thou of like was he wont to do sitting at home? Again, he that letted<sup>1</sup> not to read, albeit he did not understand, What did he then, trowest<sup>2</sup> thou, after that when he had learned and gotten understanding? For that thou mayest well know that he understood not what he read: hearken what Philip there saith unto him. Understandest thou what thou readest? And he, nothing ashamed to confess his ignorance, answered, How should I understand, having nobody to show me the way? Lo when he lacked one to show him the way, and to expound to him the scriptures, yet did he read; and therefore God the rather provided for him a guide of the way, that taught him to understand it. God perceived his willing and toward<sup>3</sup> mind: and therefore he sent him a teacher by and by. Therefore let no man be negligent about his own health and salvation: though thou have not Philip always when thou wouldest, the holy ghost, which then moved and stirred up Philip, will be ready and not fail thee if thou do thy diligence accordingly. All these things be written for us to our edification and amendment, which be borne towards the latter end of the world. The reading of the scriptures is a great and strong bulwark or fortress against sin, the ignorance of the same is the greater ruin and destruction of them that will not know it. That is the thing that

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<sup>1</sup> letted: *omitted, neglected*

<sup>2</sup> trowest: *suppose, believe*

<sup>3</sup> toward: *willing, compliant*

bringeth in heresyes, that is it, that causeth all corrupte and peruerse lyuing, that it is, y<sup>e</sup> bryngeth all thinges out of good orde. Hethereto, all that I haue sayde, I haue take and gathered out of the forsayde sermon of this holy doctour saynt John Chisostome. Nowe yf I shulde in lyke maner bryng forth, what the selve same doctour speaketh in other places, and what other doctoures and wrytters saye, concerning the same purpose, I myght seme to you to wryte another Wyble, rather then to make a preface to the Wyble. Wherefore in few wordes to comprehend the largenes and vtilytie of the scripture, howe it conteyneth frutefull instruction and erudityon for every man, yf any thynges be necessarye to be learned: of the holye scripture we maye learne it. If falshed shall be reprooved, therof we maye gather wherwith all. If any thynge be to be corrected and amended, yf there nede any exhortation or consolatyon, of the scripture we maye well learne. In the scrryptures be the fatte pastures of the soule, therin is no venymouse meate, no vnholosome thynge, they be the very dayntie and pure fedynge. He that is ignorante, shall synde there what he sholde learne. He that is a peruerse synner, shall there synde his damnatyon to make hym to tremble for feare. He that laboureth to serue God shall synde ther his glorie, & the promissiōs of eternall lyfe, exhortyng him more diligently to laboure. Herin maye prynces learne howe to gouerne their subiectes: Subiectes obediece, loue and dreade to theyr prynces. Husbandes, howe they shulde be haue the unto their wyfes: howe to educate theyr chyldren and seruautes. And contrary the wyfes, chyldren, and seruautes maye know there dutye to theyr husbandes, paretes and masters. Here maye all maner of persons, men, wemen, yonge, olde, learned, unlearned, ryche, poore, prestes, laymen, Lordes, Ladys, offycers, tenauntes, and meane men, virgyns, wyfes wedowes, lawers, marchauntes, artifycers, husbande men, and almaner of persons of what estate or condityon soever they be, maye in thys booke learne all thynges what they ought to beleue, what they ought to do, & what they

bringeth in heresies, that is it that causeth all corrupt and perverse living, that it is that bringeth all things out of good order. Hitherto all that I have said, I have taken and gathered out of the foresaid sermon of this holy doctor, saint John Chrysostom. Now if I should in like manner bring forth, what the selfsame doctor speaketh in other places, and what other doctors and writers say, concerning the same purpose, I might seem to you to write another Bible, rather than to make a preface to the Bible. Wherefore in few words to comprehend the largeness and utility of the scripture, how it containeth fruitful instruction and erudition for every man, if anything be necessary to be learned, of the holy scripture we may learn it. If falsehood shall be reproved, thereof we may gather wherewithal. If anything be to be corrected and amended, if there need any exhortation or consolation, of the scripture we may well learn. In the scriptures be the fat pastures of the soul, therein is no venomous meat, no unwholesome thing; they be the very dainty and pure feeding. He that is ignorant, shall find there what he should learn. He that is a perverse sinner, shall there find his damnation to make him to tremble for fear. He that laboureth to serve God, shall find there his glory, and the promises of eternal life, exhorting him more diligently to labour. Herein may princes learn how to govern their subjects; subjects obedience, love, and dread to their princes; husbands how they should behave them unto their wives, how to educate their children and servants. And contrary the wives, children, and servants may know their duty to their husbands, parents, and masters. Here may all manner of persons, men, women, young, old, learned, unlearned, rich, poor, priests, laymen, Lords, Ladies, officers, tenants, and mean<sup>1</sup> men, virgins, wives, widows, lawyers, merchants, artificers, husbandmen, and all manner of persons of what estate or condition soever they be, may in this book learn all things what they ought to believe, what they ought to do, and what they

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<sup>1</sup> mean: *inferior, lowly*

shulde not do, aswell concerning almyghtye God as also concernynge them selues and all other. Breiflye to the readyng of the scripture none can be enemye, but that eyther be so sycke, that they loue not to here of any medecyne: or els that be so ignoraunte, that they knowe not scripture to be the most helthfull medecyne. Therfore as touchyng thys former parte. I wyll here conclude and take it as a conclusion suffycientlye determinyd and approued, that it is conuenient and good, the scripture to be redd of all sortes & kyndes of people, and in the vulgare tonge without farther allegaciōs or probaciōs for the same, which shall not nede, syns y<sup>e</sup> thys one place of John Chrysostome is ynough & suffyciente to persuade all the y<sup>e</sup> be not frowardly and peruerslye sett in their awne wyllfull opinion, specially nowe that the kyngeis hyghnes beyng supreme hede nexte vnder Christe of thys churche of Englande hath, approued with his royal assente the setting furthe herof, which onely to all true and obedient subiectes ought to be a suffyciente reason, for the alowance of the same, without farther delaye, reclamation, or resystaunce althoough there were no preface nor other reason here in expressed. Therfore nowe to come to the secōde and latter parte of my purpose there is nothyng so good in thys worlde but it maye be abused, and turned from frutefull and holsome, to hurtfull and noysome. What is there aboue, better then the sunne, the moone, the starres? Yet was ther y<sup>e</sup> toke occasion by the great bewtye and vertue of them to dishonoure God, and to defyle them selues with ydolatrie, geuing the honour of the lyuing God and creatour of all thinges, to suche thynges as he had created.

What is there here beneath, better then fyre, water, meates, drynckes, metalles of golde, syluer, yron and stelle? Yet, we se daylie great harme and moch mischefe, done by euery one of these, aswell for lacke of wisdome

should not do, as well concerning almighty God, as also concerning themselves and all other. Briefly to the reading of scripture none can be enemy, but that either be so sick, that they love not to hear of any medicine; or else that be so ignorant, that they know not scripture to be the most healthful medicine. Therefore, as touching this former part. I will here conclude and take it as a conclusion sufficiently determined and approved, that it is convenient<sup>1</sup> and good, the scriptures to be read of all sorts and kinds of people, and in the vulgar tongue without farther allegations or probations for the same, which shall not need, since that this one place of John Chrysostom is enough and sufficient to persuade all them that be not fowardly and perversely set in their own wilful opinion, specially now that the king's highness, being supreme head next under Christ of this church of England, hath approved with his royal assent the setting forth hereof, which only to all true and obedient subjects ought to be a sufficient reason, for the allowance of the same, without farther delay, reclamation, or resistance, although there were no preface nor other reason herein expressed. Therefore now to come to the second and latter part of my purpose: there is nothing so good in this world, but it may be abused, and turned from fruitful and wholesome, to hurtful and noisome. What is there above better than the sun, the moon, the stars? Yet was there that took occasion by the great beauty and virtue of them to dishonour God, and to defile themselves with idolatry, giving the honour of the living God and creator of all things, to such things as he had created.

What is there here beneath, better than fire, water, meats, drinks, metals of gold, silver, iron, and steel? Yet, we see daily great harm and much mischief, done by every one of these, as well for lack of wisdom

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<sup>1</sup> convenient: *agreeable, appropriate*

and prouydence of them that suffer euyll, as by the malice of them that worketh the euyll. Thus to them that be euyll of them selues, every thynge setteth forwarde and increaseth their euyll, be it of his awne nature a thing never so good, lyke as contrarelye, to them that studyeth and endeuorcth them selues to goodnes, every thynge preuayleth them, and profiteth vnto good: be it of hys awne nature a thyng never so badde. As saynct Paul sayth, *hiis qui diligent deum omnia cooperantur in bonum:* even as out of moost venomouse wormes is made triacle, the moost soueraygne medecine for the preseruacyon of mans helth in tyme of daunger. Wherfore I wolde aduise you all, that cometh to the readyng or hearyng of this boke, whiche is the woorde of God, the mooste preciouse Juell, and mooste holy relique, that remayneth vpon earth, that ye bryng with you the feare of God, and that ye do it with all due reuerēce, and vse youre knowledge therof, not to vayne glorie and priuolouse disputaciō: but to the honour of God, encrease of vertu, and edification both of your selues and other. And to the entent that my woordes maye be the more regarded, I wyll vse in this parte the auctorite of saynct Gregorze Nazianzene, lyke as in the other I dyd of S. John Chrysostome. It appereth that in hys tyme there were some (as I feare me, there bene also nowe at these dayes a great nomber) whiche were ydell bablers, and talkers of the scripture out of ceason, and all good order, and without any encrease of vertu, or exāple of good lyuing, to them he wrytteth all his fyfth boke, *de theologia*. Wherof I shall breslyfe gather y<sup>e</sup> hole effecte, and recite it here vnto you. There ben some (sayeth he) whose not onely eares and tonges, but also their syttes bene whitted and ready bent all to contencyon and vnproufitable disputation, whom I wolde wishe as they bene vehemente and ernest to reason the matter with tongue: so they were also ready and practiue to do

and providence of them that suffer evil, as by the malice of them that worketh the evil. Thus to them that be evil of themselves, everything setteth forward and increaseth their evil, be it of his own nature a thing never so good, like as contrarily, to them that studyeth and endeavoureth themselves to goodness, everything prevaileth them, and profiteth unto good, be it of his own nature a thing never so bad. As Saint Paul said, *hiis qui diligunt deum, omnia cooperantur in bonum*, even as out of most venomous worms is made treacle<sup>1</sup>, the most sovereign medicine for the preservation of man's health in time of danger. Wherefore I would advise you all, that come to the reading or hearing of this book, which is the word of God, the most precious jewel, and most holy relic, that remaineth upon earth, that ye bring with you the fear of God, and that ye do it with all due reverence, and use your knowledge thereof, not to vain glory and frivolous disputation, but to the honour of God, increase of virtue, and edification both of yourselves and other. And to the intent that my words may be the more regarded, I will use in this part the authority of saint Gregory Nazianzen, like as in the other I did of St John Chrysostom. It appeareth that in his time there were some (as I fear me, there be also now at these days a great number) which were idle babblers, and talkers of the scripture out of season and all good order, and without any increase of virtue, or example of good living, to them he writeth all his first book, *de theologia*. Whereof I shall briefly gather the whole effect, and recite it here unto you. There be some (saith he) whose not only ears and tongues, but also their fists be whetted and ready bent all to contention and unprofitable disputation, whom I would wish as they be vehement and earnest to reason the matter with tongue; so they were also ready and practive<sup>2</sup> to do

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<sup>1</sup> treacle: obsolete term for a *salve used as an antidote to poisons*

<sup>2</sup> practive: *habitually disposed to*

good dedes. But sor as moche as they, subuertynge the order of all godlynnes, haue respecte onely to thys thyng. Howe they maye bynde and loose subtle questions, so that nowe every market place, every alehouse and tauerne, every feasthouse: bresly every company of men, every assembly of wemen is syllid with such talke. Sens the matter is so (sayth he) and that our sayth & holy religion of Christ begynneth to war nothing els: but as it were a sophistrye or a talkyng crafte, I can no lesse do but saye somthing therunto. It is not fitte (sayth he) for every man to dispute y<sup>e</sup> hygh questions of diuinite, nether is it to be done at all tymes: nether in euery audience must we discuse every doubte: but we must knowe whā, to whom, and how farre we ought to enter into soch matters. Fyrst, it is not for every man: but it is for suche as be of eracte and exquisite iudgementes, and suche as haue spente they<sup>r</sup> tyme before in studye and contemplatyon: and suche as before haue cleansyd them selues aswell in soule, as bodye: or at the least, endeuyored them seules to be made cleane. For it is daungerous (sayth he) for the vncleane to touch that thyng, that is mooste cleane: lyke as the sore eye taketh harme by lokynge upon the sunne. Secondarelye, not at all tymes but when we be reposid: and at reste frome all outwarde dregges and trouble, and when that oure headdes be not encombred with other worldelye and wanderinge ymagineyons: as ys a man shulde myngle balme and dyzte together. For he that shall iudge and determinye suche matteres and doubtes of scryptures, muste take hys tyme, when he maye applye hys wittes therunto, that he maye thereby the better see, and discerne what is trueth.

Thyrdelye where, and in what audience. There and amonge those that bene studious to learne, and not amonge suche as haue pleasure to tryfle with suche

good deeds. But forasmuch as they, subverting the order of all godliness, have respect only to this thing. How they may bind and loose subtle questions, so that now every marketplace, every alehouse and tavern, every feasthouse<sup>1</sup>: briefly every company of men, every assembly of women is filled with such talk. Since the matter is so (saith he) and that our faith and holy religion of Christ beginneth to wax nothing else; but as it were a sophistry or a talking craft, I can no less do but say something thereunto. It is not fit (saith he) for every man to dispute the high questions of divinity, neither is it to be done at all times: neither in every audience must we discuss every doubt. But we must know when, to whom, and how far we ought to enter into such matters. First it is not for every man; but it is for such as be of exact and exquisite judgments, and such as have spent their time before in study and contemplation; and such as before have cleansed themselves as well in soul as body; or at the least endeavoured themselves to be made clean. For it is dangerous (saith he) for the unclean to touch that thing that is most clean; like as the sore eye taketh harm by looking upon the sun. Secondarily, not at all times, but when we be reposed, and at rest from all outward dregs and trouble, and when that our heads be not encumbered with other worldly and wandering imaginations: as if a man should mingle balm and dirt together. For he that shall judge and determine such matters and doubts of scriptures, must take his time when he may apply his wits thereunto, that he may thereby the better see, and discern what is truth.

Thirdly, where, and in what audience. There and among those that be studious to learn, and not among such as have pleasure to trifle with such

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<sup>1</sup> feasthouse: *banquet hall*

mattyers as with other thynges of pastyme, which repute for there chyse  
delicates the disputacion of hygh questiones, to shewe there wittes,  
learnyng and eloquence in reasonyng of hygh mattyers. Fourthlye, it is  
to be consydered howe farre to wade in suche mattyers of diffycultie. So  
further (sayeth he) but as every mannes owne capacytie wyl serue him,  
and agayne no further the the weaknes or intelligence of the other audience  
maye bere. For lyke as to great noyse hurteth the eare, to moch meat  
hurteth a mannes bodye, to heuynge burdens hurteth the berers of them, to  
moche rayne doth more hurte then good to the grounde, breiflye in all  
thynges to moch is noyouse, euē so weke wittes & weke coscynces maye  
sone be oppressed w<sup>t</sup> ouer harde questiōs, I say not this to disuade me frome  
y<sup>e</sup> knowledge of God, & readyng or studying of y<sup>e</sup> scripture. For I saye, y<sup>t</sup>  
it is as necessarie for the lyfe of manes soule, as for y<sup>e</sup> body to breathe. And  
yf it were possyble so to lyue, I woulde thynke it good for a man to spende  
all hys lyfe in that, and to do no other thyng, I comende y<sup>e</sup> lawe whiche  
byddeth to meditate & studye the scryptures allwayes both nyght and  
daye, and Sermons and preachynges to be made both mornynge none and  
euentyde. And God to be lawed and blessed in all tymes, to beddwarde,  
from bedde, in oure iorneys, and all oure other workes. I forbydd not to  
reade, but I forbydde to reason. Nether forbydde I to reason so farre as is  
good and godlye. But I alowe not that is done oute of season, and out of  
measure and good orde. A man maye eate to moche of honey be it never so  
swete, and ther is tym for every thyng, and that thyng, that is good is  
not good, yf it be ungodly done. Euen as a flower in wynter is oute of  
season, and as womans apparell becometh not a man, nether contrarilyle,  
the mannes, the woman: nether is wepyng conuenient at a brydale,  
nether laughyng at a beryall. Nowe yf we can obserue and kepe that is  
comely and tymely in all other thynges, shall not we then the rather do the

matters, as with other things of pastime, which repute for their chief delicates the disputation of high questions, to show their wits, learning and eloquence in reasoning of high matters. Fourthly, it is to be considered how far to wade in such matters of difficulty. No further (saith he) but as every man's own capacity will serve him, and again no further than the weakness or intelligence of the other audience may bear. For like as to great noise hurteth the ear, too much meat hurteth the man's body, too heavy burdens hurt the bearers of them, too much rain doth more hurt than good to the ground, briefly in all things, too much is noyous<sup>1</sup>; even so, weak wits and weak consciences may soon be oppressed with over hard questions. I say not this to dissuade men from the knowledge of God, and reading or studying of the scripture. For I say, that it is as necessary for the life of man's soul, as for the body to breathe. And if it were possible so to live, I would think it good for a man to spend all his life in that, and to do none other thing. I commend the law which biddeth to meditate and study the scriptures always both night and day, and Sermons and preachings to be made both morning, noon, and eventide. And God to be lauded and blessed in all times, to bedward, from bed, in our journeys, and all our other works, I forbid not to read, but I forbid to reason. Neither forbid I to reason so far as is good and godly. But I allow not that is done out of season, and out of measure and good order. A man may eat too much of honey, be it never so sweet, and there is time for everything, and that thing that is good is not good if it be ungodly done. Even as a flower in winter is out of season, and as woman's apparel becometh not a man, neither contrarily, the man's the woman; neither is weeping convenient<sup>2</sup> at a bridal<sup>3</sup>, neither laughing at a burial. Now if we can observe and keep that is comely and timely in all other things, shall not we then the rather do the

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<sup>1</sup> noyous: *noxious, harmful*

<sup>2</sup> convenient: *agreeable, appropriate*

<sup>3</sup> bridal: *wedding-feast*

same in the holye scriptures? Let vs not runne furth as it were wyld horse  
that can suffre nether brydell in there mouthes, nor sytter on there backes.  
Let us kepe us in our boundes, and nether let us go to farre on thone syde,  
lest we retorne into Egypte, nether to farre ouer y<sup>e</sup> other, lest we be  
caried awaye to Babylon. Let vs not synge the songe of our Lorde in a  
straunge lande, that is to saye, let vs not dispute the wozde of God at all  
auentures, aswell where it is not to be reasoned, as where it is, and aswell  
in the eares of them y<sup>t</sup> be not fytte therfore, as of thē that be. If we can no  
wyse forbere, but that we must nedes dispute, let us forbere thus moche at  
the leaste, to do it oute of tyme, and place conuenient. And let us entreate of  
those thynges whiche be Holye, Holylie, and vpon those thynges y<sup>t</sup> bene  
mysticall, mystically, & not to vtter the dyuine misteryes in the eares  
unworþy to heare them, but let vs knowe what is comely aswell in oure  
sylence: and talkynge, as in oure garmentes werynge, in oure fedynge, in  
oure gesture, in oure goynge, and all oure other be hauynge. Thys  
contentyon and debate aboute scryptrues, and doubtes therof (specially  
whan suche as pretende to be the fauorers and studentes therof cannot agree  
within thē selifes, doth moste hurte to our selifes, and to the furtheryng  
of the cause & quarells that we woulde haue forthered aboue all other  
thynges. And we in this (sayeth he) be not unlyke to them that beyng  
madde, set there awne houses on fyre, and that sle there awne chyldre, or  
beate there awne parentes. I maruaile moch (sayth he) to recounte wherof  
commeth all this desyre of vayne glorye, wherof commeth all this tongue  
itche, that we haue so moch delight to talke and clatter. And wherin is our  
comunication? Not in the commendacions of vertuous and good deades of  
hospitalitie, of loue betwene christiane brother & brother, of loue betwen man  
& wyfe, of virginite and chastitie, and of almosē towardes the poore. Not  
in Psalmes and godly songes, not in lamentynge for oure synnes, not in  
repressoinge the affections of the body, not in prayers to God. We talke of  
scripture, but in

same in the holy scriptures? Let us not run forth as it were wild horses, that can suffer neither bridle in their mouths, nor sitter on their backs. Let us keep us in our bounds, and neither let us go too far on the one side, lest we return into Egypt, neither too far over the other, lest we be carried away to Babylon. Let us not sing the song of our Lord in a strange land, that is to say, let us not dispute the word of God at all adventures, as well where it is not to be reasoned, as where it is, and as well in the ears of them that be not fit therefore, as of them that be. If we can no wise forbear but that we must needs dispute, let us forbear thus much at the least, to do it out of time, and place convenient<sup>1</sup>. And let us entreat of those things which be Holy, Holily, and upon those things that be mystical, mystically, and not to utter the divine mysteries in the ears unworthy to hear them, but let us know what is comely, as well in our silence, and talking, as in our garments wearing, in our feeding, in our gesture, in our goings, and all our other behaving. This contention and debate about scriptures, and doubts thereof (specially when such as do pretend to be the favourers and students thereof cannot agree within themselves) doth most hurt to ourselves, and to the furthering of the cause and quarrels that we would have furthered above all other things. And we in this (saith he) be not unlike to them that, being mad, set their own houses on fire, and that slay their own children, or beat their own parents. I marvel much (saith he) to recount whereof cometh all this desire of vain glory, whereof cometh all this tongue itch, that we have so much delight to talk and clatter. And wherein is our communication? Not in the commendations of virtuous and good deeds of hospitality, of love between Christian brother and brother, of love between man and wife, of virginity and chastity, and of alms toward the poor. Not in Psalms and godly songs, not in lamenting for our sins, not in repressing the affections of the body, not in prayers to God. We talk of scripture, but in

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<sup>1</sup> convenient: *agreeable, appropriate*

y<sup>e</sup> meane tyme we subdewe not our fleshe, by fastinge, wakynge, and wepyng, we make not this lyfe a meditation of death, we do not stryue to be Lordes of oure appetites & affections. We goo not aboue to pull downe our proude & hygh myndes to abate our sumyshē & rancorouse stomakes, to restrayne our lustes & bodeley delectacions, oure vndiscrete sorowes, oure lasciuious merthe, our inordinate lokynge, oure vnsaciablie herynge of vanities, oure speakyng without measure, oure incōuenient thoughtes, and breifly, to reforme oure lyfe and maners: but all oure holynes cosysteth in talkynge. And we pardon eche other frome all good lyuyng, so that we may stych fast together in argumentacyon, as though there were no moo wayes to heauen, but thys alone the waye of speculatyon and knowledge (as they take it) but in very dead, it is rather the waye of superfluous contention and sophisticacio. Hethereto haue I recypted the mynde of Gregoře Nazianzene in that booke whiche I spake of before. The same authour sayeth also in an other place that the learnynge of a Chysten man ought to begynne of the feare of God, to ende in matyers of hygh speculacio, and not contrarily to begynne with speculation and to ende in feare. For speculatio (saieth he) other hye connyng and knowledge, yf it be not, stayed with the brydell of feare to offendre Godde is daungerous and enough to tumble a man hedelinge downe the hyll. Therfore, sayeth he, the feare of God must be the fyrt begynnynge and as it were an abce or an introductio to all them that shall enter to the very trew and most frutefull knowledge of holy scriptures. Where as is the feare of God, there is, sayeth he, the kepinge of the commaundementes, and where as is the kepyng of the comaundemētes, there is the clensyng of the fleshe, which fleshe is a cloude before the soules eye, and sufferereth it not puerlye to se the beame of y<sup>e</sup> heuenly light. Where as is the clensyng of the fleshe, there is

the meantime we subdue not our flesh, by fasting, waking, and weeping, we make not this life a meditation of death, we do not strive to be Lords of our appetites and affections. We go not about to pull down our proud and high minds, to abate our fumish<sup>1</sup> and rancourous stomachs, to restrain our lusts and bodily delectations, our indiscreet sorrows, our lascivious mirth, our inordinate looking, our insatiable hearing of vanities, our speaking without measure, our inconvenient<sup>2</sup> thoughts, and briefly, to reform our life and manners: but all our holiness consisteth in talking. And we pardon each other from all good living, so that we may stick fast together in argumentation, as though there were no more ways to heaven but this alone, the way of speculation and knowledge (as they take it) but in very deed it is rather the way of superfluous contention and sophification.

Hitherto have I recited the mind of Gregory Nazianzen in that book which I spake of before. The same author saith also in another place that the learning of a Christian man ought to begin of the fear of God, to end in matters of high speculation; and not contrarily to begin with speculation and to end in fear. For speculation (saith he), other high cunning or knowledge, if it be not stayed<sup>3</sup> with the bridle of fear to offend God is dangerous, and enough to tumble a man headlong down the hill.

Therefore, saith he, the fear of God must be the first beginning, and as it were an ABC or an introduction to all them that shall enter into the very true and most fruitful knowledge of holy scriptures. Where as is the fear of God, there is (saith he) the keeping of the commandments, and where as is the keeping of the commandments, there is the cleansing of the flesh, which flesh is a cloud before the soul's eye, and suffereth it not purely to see the beam of the heavenly light. Where as is the cleansing of the flesh, there is

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<sup>1</sup> fumish: *tending to produce bloating or flatulence*

<sup>2</sup> inconvenient: *disagreeable, inappropriate*

<sup>3</sup> stayed: *supported*

the illumination of the holy ghost, thende of all oure desyres, and the very lyght wherby the verytie of scriptures is seen and perceyued. This is the mynde and almost the wordes of Gregorie Nazianzene doctour of the greke churche of whom saynt Jerome sayth, that unto hys tyme, the laten churche had no wryter able to be compared, and to make an euen matche with him. Therfore to conclude this latter parte, every man that commeth to the readyng of this holye booke ought to bryng with hym syr and formoste thys feare of almyghtye godde, and then nerke a sygne and stable purpose to reforme hys awne selfe accordynge ther unto, and so to contynue procede, and prospere frome tyme to tyme, shewynge hym selfe to be a sober and frutefull herer and lerner, which ys he doo, he shall prove at the leghth well able to teache, though not with hys mouth, yet with hys lyuyng and good example, which is suer the most lyuely, and effecteouise forme and maner of teachyng. He that otherwyse intermedeleth with this booke let hym be assured, that ons he shall make accompte therfore, when he shall haue sayde to hym as it is wrytten in the Prophete David, Peccatori dicit deus ecce. Unto the ungodly sayde God, why doest thou preache my lawes, and takest my testament in thy mouth: Where as thou hatest to be reformed, and hast caste my wordes behynde the. When thou sawest a thele, thou consentyddest unto hym, and hast bene partetaker with aduouterers. Thou hast lett thy mouth speake wyckednes, and with thy tonge thou hast setforth disceypte. Thou fatest and spakest agaynst thy brother and hast sclaudered the awne mothers sonne. These thynges hast thou done, & I helde my tong and y<sup>e</sup> thoughtest (wyckedly) that I am euen suche a one as thy selfe. But I wyl reproue the, and sett before the, the thynges that thou hast done. O consyder this, ye that forget God lest I plucke you a waye, and ther be none to deliuer you. Who so offereth me

the illumination of the holy ghost, the end of all our desires, and the very light whereby the verity of scriptures is seen and perceived. This is the mind and almost the words of Gregory Nazianzen, doctor of the Greek Church, of whom saint Jerome saith, that unto his time, the Latin Church had no writer able to be compared, and to make an even match with him. Therefore to conclude this latter part, every man that cometh to the reading of this holy book ought to bring with him first and foremost this fear of almighty God, and then next a firm and stable purpose to reform his own self according thereunto, and so to continue, proceed, and prosper from time to time, showing himself to be a sober and fruitful hearer and learner; which, if he do, he shall prove at the length well able to teach, though not with his mouth, yet with his living and good example, which is sure the most lively and effectuous form and manner of teaching. He that otherwise intermeddleth with this book let him be assured that once he shall make account therefore, when he shall have said to him as it is written in the Prophet David, *Peccatori dicit deus &c.* Unto the ungodly said God, why dost thou preach my laws, and takest my testament in thy mouth? Whereas thou hatest to be reformed, and hast cast my words behind thee. When thou sawest a thief, thou consentedest unto him, and hast been partaker with advouterers<sup>1</sup>. Thou hast let thy mouth speak wickedness, and with thy tongue thou hast set forth deceit. Thou satest and spakest against thy brother, and hast slandered thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done, and I held my tongue and thou thoughtest (wickedly) that I am even such a one as thyself: But I will reprove thee, and set before thee the things that thou hast done. O consider this, ye that forget God lest I pluck you away, and there be none to deliver you. Whoso offereth me

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<sup>1</sup> advouterers: *adulterers*

thakes and prayse he honoureth me, and to hym that ordereth hys  
conuersation ryght: wyll I shewe the saluation of godde.

**God saue the kyngē.**

thanks and praise, he honoureth me, and to him that ordereth his conversation right, will I show the salvation of God.

God save the King.

# A fruicteful exhortation, to the readyng and knowldege of holie Scripture.

**W**pto a Christia mā there can be nothing, either more necessarie, or profitable, then the knowlege of holie scripture: for as moche as in it is cōteinēd Goddes true woordē settyngh foorth his glorie, and also mannes duetie. And there is no trueth, nor doctrine necessarie for our iustification & euerlastyng saluacion, but that is, (or maie be) drawen out of that fountaine, & well of trueth. Therefore as many as be desirous to entre into the right & perfect waie vnto God, must applie their mindes to knowe holie scripture without the whiche, thei can neither sufficiētly knowe God, & his wille, neither their office and duetie. And as drinke is pleasaunt to them, that be drie, & meate to them that be hungrie: so is the readyng, hearyng, searchyng, & studiyng of holie scripture, to them that be desirous to knowe God, or themselves, & to dooe his wille. And their stomaches onely, to loth & abhorre the heauenlie knowlege and foode of Goddes woordē, that be so drowned in worlde lie vanities, that thei neither fauour God, nor any godlinesse: for that is the cause why thei desire soche vanities, rather then the true knowlege of God. As thei that are sicke of an ague whatsoeuer thei eate or drinke (though it be never so pleasaunt) yet it is as bitter to them, as wormewoode, not for the bitterness of the meate, but for the corrupte, & bitter humour, that is in their own toungue & mouthe: euen so is the swetenesse of Goddes woordē, bitter, not of it self, but onely unto them, that haue their mindes corrupted

# A FRUITFUL EXHORTATION to the Reading and Knowledge of Holy Scripture.

UNTO a Christian man there can be nothing either more necessary or profitable, than the knowledge of holy Scripture, forasmuch as in it is contained God's true word, setting forth his glory, and also man's duty. And there is no truth nor doctrine necessary for our justification and everlasting salvation, but that is (or may be) drawn out of that fountain and well of truth. Therefore as many as be desirous to enter into the right and perfect way unto God, must apply their minds to know holy Scripture, without the which, they can neither sufficiently know God and his will, neither their office and duty. And as drink is pleasant to them that be dry, and meat to them that be hungry: so is the reading, hearing, searching, and studying of holy Scripture, to them that be desirous to know God or themselves, and to do his will. And their stomachs only, to loathe and abhor the heavenly knowledge and food of God's word, that be so drowned in worldly vanities, that they neither favour God, nor any godliness: for that is the cause why they desire such vanities, rather then the true knowledge of God. As they that are sick of an ague, whatsoever they eat or drink (though it be never so pleasant) yet it is as bitter to them as wormwood, not for the bitterness of the meat, but for the corrupt and bitter humour that is in their own tongue and mouth: even so is the sweetness of God's word bitter, not of itself, but only unto them that have their minds corrupted

with log custome of sinne, & loue of this worlde. Therefore forsayng the corrupt iudgement of carnal men, whiche care not, but for their carcasse, leat vs reuerently heare, & read holie Scriptures, whiche is the foode of the soule. Leat vs diligently searche for the welle of life, in the bookes of the new & olde testament, and not run to the stinkyng paddles of mennes tradicions, diuisid by mannes imaginacio, for our iustification & saluacion. For in holie scripture is fully conteined, what we ought to doo, and what to eschewe, what to beleue, what to loue, and what to looke for at Goddes handes at length. In these bookees wee shall finde the father, from whom, the sonne, by who, and the holie ghost, in whom, all thinges haue their beyng and conseruacion, and these three persones, to bee but one God, & one substaunce. In these books we maie learne to knowe our selues, how vile and miserable we be, and also to knowe god, how good he is himself, and how he communicateth his goodnessse unto us, and to al creatures. We maie learne also in these bookes, to knowe Goddes will and pleasure, asmuch as (for this preset time) is conuenient for vs to knowe. And (as the greate clerke, and godlie preacher sancte Ioh Chrysostome saith) whatsoeuer is required to saluacion of man, is fully conteined in the scripture of God. He that is ignoraunt, maie there learne and haue knowlege: he that is harde harted, and an obstinate sinner, shall there finde eternall tormentes (prepared of Goddes iustice) to make him astrained, and to mollifie him. He that is oppressed with miserie in this worlde, shall there finde relief in the promises of eternal life, to his greate consolacion and coumforte. He that is wounded (by the deuill) unto death shall finde there Medecine, whereby he maie be restored again unto health. If it shall require to teache any truelth, or reproue false doctrine, to rebuke any vice, to commende any vertue, to geve good counsaill, to coumfort, or to exhort, or

with long custom of sin and love of this world. Therefore forsaking the corrupt judgement of carnal men, which care not but for their carcase: let us reverently hear and read holy Scriptures, which is the food of the soul. Let us diligently search for the well of life in the books of the New and Old Testament, and not run to the stinking puddles of men's traditions (devised by man's imagination) for our justification and salvation. For in holy Scripture is fully contained what we ought to do, and what to eschew; what to believe, what to love, and what to look for at God's hands at length. In these Books we shall finde the Father *from* whom, the Son *by* whom, and the Holy Ghost *in* whom all things have their being and conservation, and these three persons to be but one God, and one substance. In these books we may learn to know ourselves, how vile and miserable we be, and also to know God, how good he is himself, and how he communicateth his goodness unto us and to all creatures. We may learn also in these books to know God's will and pleasure, as much as (for this present time) is convenient<sup>1</sup> for us to know. And (as the great clerk and godly preacher Saint John Chrysostom saith) whatsoever is required to the salvation of man, is fully contained in the Scripture of God. He that is ignorant, may there learn and have knowledge. He that is hard hearted, and an obstinate sinner, shall there find everlasting torments (prepared of God's justice) to make him afraid, and to mollify him. He that is oppressed with misery in this world, shall there find relief in the promises of eternal life, to his great consolation and comfort. He that is wounded (by the Devil) unto death shall find there medicine whereby he may be restored again unto health. If it shall require to teach any truth, or reprove false doctrine, to rebuke any vice, to commend any virtue, to give good counsel, to comfort or to exhort, or

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<sup>1</sup> convenient: *agreeable, appropriate*

to doo any other thing, requisite for our saluacion, all those thinges, (saith saint Chrysostome) we maie learne plentifullly of the scripture. There is (saith Fulgentius) abundantly enough, bothe for men to eate, and children to sucke. There is, whatsoeuer is conueniente for all ages, and for all degrees, and sortes of menne. These bokes therfore ought to be moche in our handes, in our ries, in our eares, in our mouthes, but mooste of all in our hartes. For the scripture of God is the heauenlie meate of our soulles, the hearyng & kepyng of it maketh vs blessed, sanctifieth vs, and maketh vs holie, it couerteth our soulles: it is a light lanterne to our feete: it is a sure, a constant, and a perpetuall instrument of saluacion, it geueth wisedome to the humble and lowelie hartes: it coumforteth, maketh glad, chereth and cherisheth our conscience: it is a more excellēt iewell or treasure, then any golde or precious stone: It is more sweter then Honie, or honie combe: it is called the best parte, the whiche Marie did chouse, for it hath in it, euerlastyng coufort. The woordes of holie scripture be called woordes of euerlastyng life: for thei be Goddes instrument, ordeined for the same purpose. Thei haue power to couert through goddes promise, and thei be effectuall, through goddes assistance, and (beyng received in a faithfull hart) thei haue euer an heauenlie spirituall woorking in them, thei are liuelie, quicke, and mightie in operacion, and sharper then any ii edged sworde, and entreth through, even unto the diuidyng a sundre of the soule and the spirite, of the ioinctes and the marrowe. Christ calleth him a wise builder, that buildeth upon his worde, upon his sure and substanciall foundaciō. By this worde of god, we shalbe iudged: for the worde that I speake (saith Christ) is it y<sup>t</sup> shal iudge in the last daie. He that kepereth the woord of Christ, is promised the loue & fauour of god, & that he shalbe the mansion place, or tēple of the blessed Trinitie. This worde, whosoeuer is

to do any other thing requisite for our salvation, all those things (saith Saint Chrysostom) we may learn plentifully of the Scripture. There is (saith Fulgentius) abundantly enough, both for men to eat, and children to suck. There is, whatsoever is convenient<sup>1</sup> for all ages, and for all degrees and sorts of men. These Books therefore ought to be much in our hands, in our eyes, in our ears, in our mouths, but most of all in our hearts. For the Scripture of God is the heavenly meat of our souls, the hearing and keeping of it maketh us blessed, sanctifieth us, and maketh us holy, it converteth our souls; it is a light lantern to our feet; it is a sure, a constant, and a perpetual instrument of salvation, it giveth wisdom to the humble and lowly hearts; it comforteth, maketh glad, cheereth, and cherisheth our conscience: it is a more excellent jewell or treasure, than any gold or precious stone; it is more sweet than honey, or honeycomb; it is called the best part, which Mary did choose, for it hath in it perpetual comfort. The words of holy Scripture be called words of everlasting life: for they be God's instrument, ordained for the same purpose. They have power to convert through God's promise, and they be effectual through God's assistance, and (being received in a faithful heart) they have ever an heavenly spiritual working in them: they are lively, quick, and mighty in operation, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and entereth through, even unto the dividing asunder of the soul and the spirit, of the joints and the marrow. Christ calleth him a wise builder, that buildeth upon his word, upon his sure and substantial foundation. By this word of God, we shall be judged: for the word that I speak (saith Christ) is it, that shall judge in the last day. He that keepeth the word of Christ, is promised the love and favour of God, and that he shall be the mansion place or temple of the blessed Trinity.

This word, whosoever is

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<sup>1</sup> convenient: *agreeable, appropriate*

diligent to read, & in his harte to print y<sup>t</sup> he readeth, the great affeccion to the trāistorie thinges of this worlde, shalbe minished in him, and the great desire of heauenly thinges (that be therin promised of God) shall encrease in hym. And there is nothing, that so muche establisheth our faithe, and trust in God, that so moche conserueth innocencie, and purenesse of the harte, and also of outward godlie life and conuersacion, as continuall readyng and meditacion of Goddes woordē. For that thing, whiche (by perpetuall vse of readyng of holie scripture, and diligente searchyng of the same) is depely printed, and grauen in the harte, at length tourneth almoste into nature. And moreouer, the effecte and vertue of goddes woordē, is to illuminate the ignoraunt, & to geue more light vnto thē that faithfully and diligently read it, to coumfort their hartes, and to encourage them to perfourme that, whiche of God is commaunded. It teacheth paciēce in all aduersitie, in prosperitie, hūblenesse: what honour is due vnto God, what mercie and charitie to our neighbor. It geueth good counsaill in all doubtfull thinges. It sheweth of whom wee shall looke for aide and helpe in all perilles, and that God is the onely geuer of victorie, in all battailes and temptacions of our enemies, bodily and ghostely. And in readyng of Goddes woordē, he mooste profiteth not alwaies, that is mooste readie in tournyng of the booke, or in saying of it without the booke, but he that is tourned into it, that is mooste inspired with the holie ghoste, mooste in his harte and life altered and transfoumed into that thing, whiche he readeth: he that is daiely lesse and lesse proud, lesse irefull, lesse couetous, and lesse desirous of wortdelie and vain pleasures: he that daily (forsakyng his olde vicious life) encreaseth in vertue more and more. And to bee shorte, there is

diligent to read, and in his heart to print that he readeth, the great affection to the transitory things of this world, shall be minished<sup>1</sup> in him, and the great desire of heavenly things (that be therein promised of God) shall increase in him. And there is nothing that so much establisheth our faith and trust in God, that so much conserveth innocence and pureness of the heart, and also of outward godly life and conversation, as continual reading and meditation of God's word. For that thing, which (by perpetual use of reading of holy scripture, and diligent searching of the same) is deeply printed and graven in the heart, at length turneth almost into nature. And moreover, the effect and virtue of God's word is, to illuminate the ignorant, and to give more light unto them that faithfully and diligently read it, to comfort their hearts, and to encourage them to perform that which of God is commanded. It teacheth patience in all adversity; in prosperity, humbleness: what honour is due unto God, what mercy and charity to our neighbor. It giveth good counsel in all doubtful things. It sheweth of whom we shall look for aid and help in all perils, and that God is the only giver of victory, in all battles and temptations of our enemies, bodily and ghostly. And in reading of God's word, he most profiteth not always, that is most ready in turning of the book, or in saying of it without the book, but he that is turned into it, that is most inspired with the holy Ghost, most in his heart and life altered and transformed into that thing which he readeth: he that is daily less and less proud, less ireful<sup>2</sup>, less covetous, and less desirous of worldly and vain pleasures: he that daily (forsaking his old vicious life) increaseth in virtue more and more. And to be short, there is

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<sup>1</sup> minished: *diminished, lessened*

<sup>2</sup> ireful: *angry, wrathful*

nothing, that more mainteineth godlinesse of the minde, and expelleth vngodlinesse, then dooeth the continual readyng, or hearyng of Goddes woerde, if it be iogned with a godlie minde, and a good affecciō, to knowe and folowe Goddes will. For without a single yie, pure entent and good minde, nothing is allowed for good before God. And on the other side, nothing more obscureth Christ, and the glorie of God, nor induceth more blindnesse, and all kindes of vices, then dooeth the ignorance of Goddes woerde.

¶ The second parte of the Ser-  
mone of the holie scripture.

¶ the first parte of this homelie whiche exhorteth to the knowlege of holie scripture, was declared, wherefore the knowlege of the same is necessarie and profitable to al me. And that by the true knowlege and vnderstanding of scripture, the moste necessarie poinctes of our duetie towardes God and our neigbours, are also knownen. Now as concerning the same matier, you shall heare what foloweth.

If we professe Christ, why be we not ashamed to be ignorant in his doctrine? Seyng that every man is ashamed to be ignorant in that learning whiche he professeth. That man is ashamed to be called a Philosopher, whiche readeth not the bokes of Philosophie, & to be called a lawier, Astronomer, or a Phisicion, that is ignorant in the bokes of lawe, Astronomie, & Phisicke. Now can any man then say that he professeth Christ, and his religion, if he will not applie himselfe (as ferforth as he can or maie conueniently) to read & heare, and so to knowe the bokes of Christes Gospell & doctrine? Although other sciences be good, and to be

nothing that more maintaineth godliness of the mind, and expelleth ungodliness, than doth the continual reading or hearing of God's word, if it be joined with a godly mind, and a good affection, to know and follow God's will. For without a single eye, pure intent, and good mind, nothing is allowed for good before God. And on the other side, nothing more obscureth Christ, and the glory of God, nor induceth more blindness, and all kinds of vices, than doth the ignorance of God's word.

### The Second Part of the Sermon of the Holy Scripture.

In the first part of this homily, which exhorteth to the knowledge of holy Scripture, was declared wherefore the knowledge of the same is necessary and profitable to all men, and that by the true knowledge and understanding of Scripture, the most necessary points of our duty towards God and our neighbours are also known. Now as concerning the same matter, you shall hear what followeth.

If we profess Christ, why be we not ashamed to be ignorant in his doctrine? Seeing that every man is ashamed to be ignorant in that learning which he professeth. That man is ashamed to be called a Philosopher, which readeth not the books of Philosophy, and to be called a Lawyer, Astronomer, or a Physician, that is ignorant in the books of Law, Astronomy, and Physic. Now can any man then say that he professeth Christ and his religion, if he will not apply himself (as far forth as he can or may conveniently<sup>1</sup>) to read and hear, and so to know the books of Christ's Gospel and doctrine? Although other sciences be good, and to be

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<sup>1</sup> conveniently: *agreeably, appropriately*

learned, yet no man can denie, but this is the chief, and passeth all other incomparably. What excuse shall wee therefore make (at the last daie before Christ) that delite to read or heare mēnes phantasies and iuencions, more then his moste holie gospell, & will finde no time to doo that, whiche chiefly (aboue all thinges) wee should doe, & wil rather read other thinges, then that, for the whiche we ought rather to leauie readyng of al other thinges? Let vs therefore applie our selues, as kerfroozthe as we can haue time & leisure to knowe Goddes woord, by diligent hearing and readyng therof, as many as professe God, and haue faithe and trust in him. But thei that haue no good affeccion to Goddes woord (to coloure this their faulte) allege commonly twoo vain and feigned excuses. Some goe aboute to excuse theim, by their awne fraisnesse and fearesfulnesse, saiyng: that thei dare not read holie Scripture, least through their ignorance, thei should fal into any error. Other pretende, that the difficultie to vnderstande it, and the hardnesse therof is so great, that it is mete to be read onely of clerkes and learned me. As touchyng the first, ignorance of goddes woord, is the cause of all error: as Christe himselfe affirmed to the Sadduces, saiyng: that thei erred, because thei knewe not the Scripture. How shold thei then eschewe error, that wil be stil ignorant? And how shold thei come out of ignorance, that wil not read nor heare that thing, whiche should geue theim knowlege? He y<sup>e</sup> now hath moste knowlege, was at the first ignorant, yet he forbare not to read, for feare he should fall into error: but he diligently read, least he should remaine in ignorance, and through ignorance, in error.

And if you will not knowe the trueth of god, (a thing moste necessarie for you) least you fal into error: by the same reason you maie then lie still, and never go, least (if you goe) you fall in the mire, nor eate any good

learned, yet no man can deny, but this is the chief, and passeth all other incomparably. What excuse shall we therefore make (at the last day before Christ) that delight to read or hear men's fantasies and inventions, more than his most holy Gospel, and will find no time to do that which chiefly (above all things) we should do, and will rather read other things than that, for the which we ought rather to leave reading of all other things? Let us therefore apply ourselves, as far forth as we can have time and leisure, to know God's word, by diligent hearing and reading thereof, as many as profess God, and have faith and trust in him. But they that have no good affection to God's word (to colour this their fault) allege commonly two vain and feigned excuses. Some go about to excuse them by their own frailness and fearfulness, saying that they dare not read holy Scripture, lest through their ignorance, they should fall into any error. Other pretend that the difficulty to understand it, and the hardness thereof is so great, that it is meet to be read only of Clerks and learned men. As touching the first: Ignorance of God's word is the cause of all error, as Christ himself affirmed to the Sadducees, saying that they erred, because they knew not the Scripture. How should they then eschew error, that will be still ignorant? And how should they come out of ignorance, that will not read nor hear that thing which should give them knowledge? He that now hath most knowledge, was at the first ignorant, yet he forbore not to read, for fear he should fall into error; but he diligently read, lest he should remain in ignorance, and through ignorance in error.

And if you will not know the truth of God (a thing most necessary for you) lest you fall into error, by the same reason you may then lie still, and never go, lest (if you go) you fall in the mire: nor eat any good

meate, least you take a surfette, nor solwe your corne, nor labour in your occupacion, nor vse your merchandise, for feare you lose your sede, your labour, your stocke, and so by that reason, it shold be best for you to liue idly, and neuer to take in hande to dooe any maner of good thing, least peraduenture some euill thing maie chaunce therof. And if you be afraide to falle into errorre, by readyng of holie Scripture: I shall shewe you, how you maie read it without daunger of errorre. Read it humbly with a meeke and a lowely heart, to the intent you maie glorifie God, and not your selfe, with the knowelege of it: and read it not without daily praying to god that he would directe your readyng to good effecte, & take vpon you to expoune it no farther then you can plainly understande it. For (as Saincte Augustine saith) the knowelege of holie Scripture, is a great, large, and a high palace, but the doore is very lowe: so that the high and arrogant manne, cannot run in, but he must stoupe lowe: and humble himself, that shal entre into it. Presumption and arrogancie, is the mother of all errorre: and humilitie needeth to feare no errorre. for humilitie wil on ly searche to knowe the trueth, it will searche, and will conferre one place with another: and where it cannot finde the sence, it will pracie, it wil enquire of other that knowe and wil not presumptuously & rashely define any thing, whiche it knoweth not. Therefore, the humble manne maie searche any trueth boldly in the Scripture, without any daunger of errorre. And if he bee ignoraunt, he ought the more to reade, and to search holie Scripture, to bring him out of ignoraunce. I saie not naie, but a man maie prospere, with onely hearyng, but he maie moche more prospere, with bothe hearyng and readyng. This haue I saied, as touchyng the feare to read, through ignoraunce of the persone. And concerningy the difficultie of Scripture, he that is so weake, that he is not hable to brooke stronge meate:

meat, lest you take a surfeit, nor sow your corn, nor labour in your occupation, nor use your merchandise, for fear you lose your seed, your labour, your stock, and so by that reason, it should be best for you to live idly, and never to take in hand to do any manner of good thing, lest peradventure<sup>1</sup> some evil thing may chance thereof. And if you be afraid to fall into error, by reading of holy Scripture: I shall shew you how you may read it without danger of error. Read it humbly with a meek and lowly heart, to the intent you may glorify God, and not yourself, with the knowledge of it: and read it not without daily praying to God, that he would direct your reading to good effect: and take upon you to expound it no further, then you can plainly understand it. For (as Saint Augustine saith) the knowledge of holy Scripture, is a great, large, and a high palace, but the door is very low, so that the high and arrogant man cannot run in: but he must stoop low, and humble himself, that shall enter into it. Presumption and arrogance is the mother of all error: and humility needeth to fear no error. For humility will only search to know the truth, it will search, and will confer one place with another, and where it cannot find the sense, it will pray, it will enquire of others that know, and will not presumptuously and rashly define anything, which it knoweth not. Therefore the humble man may search any truth boldly in the Scripture, without any danger of error. And if he be ignorant, he ought the more to read and to search holy Scripture, to bring him out of ignorance. I say not nay, but a man may prosper with only hearing, but he may much more prosper, with both hearing and reading. This have I said, as touching the fear to read, through ignorance of the person. And concerning the difficulty of Scripture, he that is so weak that he is not able to brook strong meat,

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<sup>1</sup> peradventure: *perhaps*

yet he maie sucke the sweete and tender milke, and differre the reste, vntil  
he ware stronger, and come to more knowleage. For God receiueth the  
learned and unlearned, and casteth awaie none, but is indifferent vnto al.  
And the Scripture is full, aswell of lowe vallies, plaine waies, and easie  
for every manne to vse, and to walke in: as also of high hilles and  
mountaines, which fewe menne can ascende vnto. And whosoeuer geueth his  
minde to holie Scriptures, with diligent studie, and seruent desire, it cannot  
be (saith Saincte Ihon Chrysostome) that he shoulde bee destitute of helpe.  
For either GOD Almighty will sende him some Godlie Doctor to  
instructe him, as he did to instructe Eunuchus, a noble man of Ethiopia,  
and threasurer vnto Quene Candace, who hauyng a great affection to  
read the Scripture (although he vnderstode it not) yet for the desire that he  
had vnto Goddes woord, God sent his Apostle Philippe, to declare vnto  
him the true sense of the Scripture, that he readde: or elles, if we lacke a  
learned man to instructe & teache vs, yet God him selfe from aboue, will  
geue light vnto our mindes, & teache vs those thinges whiche are necessarie  
for vs, and wherin we be ignoraunt. And in an other place, Chrysostome  
saith: that mannes humaine & worldelie wisedome or science, needeth not  
to the vnderstanding of scripture, but the reuelacion of the holie Ghoste,  
who inspireth the true sense vnto the, that with humilitie & diligēce dooe  
searche therefor. He that asketh, shal haue, & he that seeketh shal finde, and  
he that knocketh, shal haue the doore open. If we reade ones, twise, or thrise,  
and vnderstande not: Leat vs not ceasse so, but stil continue readyng,  
praiyng, askyng of other, and so by still knocking (at the last) the doore  
shalbe opened, (as Saincte Augustine saith.) Although many thinges in  
the Scripture bee spoken in obscure misteries, yet there is nothing spoken  
vnder darke misteries, in one place, but the selfe same thing in other places,

yet he may suck the sweet and tender milk, and defer the rest, until he wax<sup>1</sup> stronger, and come to more knowledge. For God receiveth the learned and unlearned, and casteth away none, but is indifferent<sup>2</sup> unto all. And the Scripture is full, as well of low valleys, plain ways, and easy for every man to use, and to walk in: as also of high hills and mountains, which few men can ascend unto.

And whosoever giveth his mind to holy Scriptures, with diligent study and fervent desire, it can not be (saith Saint Chrysostom) that he should be destitute of help. For either God Almighty will send him some godly doctor, to instruct him, as he did to instruct Eunuchus, a noble man of Ethiopia, and Treasurer unto Queen Candace, who having a great affection to read the Scripture (although he understood it not) yet for the desire that he had unto God's word, God sent his Apostle Philip to declare unto him the true sense of the Scripture that he read: or else, if we lack a learned man to instruct and teach us, yet God himself from above, will give light unto our minds, and teach us those things which are necessary for us, and wherein we be ignorant. And in another place Chrysostom saith, that man's humane and worldly wisdom or science, needeth not to the understanding of Scripture, but the revelation of the Holy Ghost, who inspireth the true sense unto them, that with humility and diligence do search therefore. He that asketh, shall have, and he that seeketh shall find, and he that knocketh, shall have the door open. If we read once, twice, or thrice, and understand not, let us not cease so, but still continue reading, praying, asking of other, and so by still knocking (at the last) the door shall be opened (as Saint Augustine saith). Although many things in the Scripture be spoken in obscure mysteries, yet there is nothing spoken under dark mysteries in one place, but the self-same thing in other places

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<sup>1</sup> wax: *grow*

<sup>2</sup> indifferent: in this usage, *even-handed, nonpartisan*

is spoken more familiarely and plainly, to the capacitie bothe of learned and unlearned. And those thinges in the Scripture that bee plaine to understande, and necessarie for saluacion, every mannes duetie is to learne them, to printe them in memorie, and effectually to exercise theim. And as for the obscure misteries, to bee contented to bee ignoraunt in them, vntill soche time as it shal please GOD, to open those thinges unto him. In the meane season, if he lacke either aptenesse, or oportunitie, God wil not impute it to his folie: but yet it behoueth not, that soche as be apte, should sette aside readyng, because some other be vnapte to read: neuerthelesse, for the difficultie of soche places, the readyng of the whole, ought not to be sette aparte. And briefly to conclude (as S. Augustine saith) by the Scripture, all menne bee amended: weake menne bee strengthned, and strong menne be coumforted. So that surely, none be enemies to the readyng of Goddes woord, but soche as either be so ignoraunt, that thei knowe not how wholsome a thing it is, or elles bee so sickle, that thei hate the moste conforable medicine, that should heale theim: Or so vngodlie, that thei would wishe the people, stil to continue in blidenesse and ignoraunce of God.

Thus we haue briefly touched some parte of the commodities of Goddes holie woord, whiche is one of Goddes chiel and principall beneficetes, geuen & declared to mankinde here in earth. Let vs thake God hartely, for this his great and special gifte, beneficial fauour, and faterlie prouidence. Leat vs be glad to reviue this precious gifte, of our heauenlie fater. Leat vs heare, read, and knowe these holie rules, Injunctiones, and statutes of our Christian religion, and vpon that wee haue made profession to God at our Baptisme. Leat vs with feare and reuerence laie vp (in the cheste of our hartes) these necessarie and fruictful Lessons. Leat vs

is spoken more familiarly and plainly, to the capacity both of learned and unlearned. And those things in the Scripture that be plain to understand, and necessary for salvation, every man's duty is to learn them, to print them in memory, and effectually to exercise them. And as for the obscure mysteries, to be contented to be ignorant in them, until such time as it shall please God to open those things unto him. In the mean season, if he lack either aptness or opportunity, God will not impute it to his folly: but yet it behoveth not, that such as be apt, should set aside reading, because some other be unapt to read: nevertheless, for the difficulty of such places, the reading of the whole ought not to be set apart. And briefly to conclude, (as Saint Augustine saith) by the Scripture, all men be amended, weak men be strengthened, and strong men be comforted. So that surely, none be enemies to the reading of God's word, but such as either be so ignorant, that they know not how wholesome a thing it is: or else be so sick, that they hate the most comfortable medicine that should heale them: or so ungodly, that they would wish the people still to continue in blindness and ignorance of God.

Thus we have briefly touched some part of the commodities of God's holy word, which is one of God's chief and principal benefits, given and declared to mankind here in earth. Let us thank God heartily, for this his great and special gift, beneficial favor, and fatherly providence. Let us be glad to revive this precious gift of our heavenly Father. Let us hear, read, and know these holy rules, injunctions, and statutes of our Christian religion, and upon that we have made profession to God at our baptism. Let us with fear and reverence lay up (in the chest of our hearts) these necessary and fruitful lessons. Let us

nighte and daie muse, and haue meditation and contemplacion in theim.  
Let vs ruminante, & (as it were) chewe the cudde, that we maie haue the  
sweete ieuse, spirituall effecte, marrowe, honie, kernel, tast, comforthe &  
consolation of theim. Leat vs staighe, quiete, and certifie our consciences  
with the moste infallible certaintie, trueth, and perpetual assuraunce of  
theim. Leat vs praeie to God (the onely aucthour of these heauenlie  
meditaciones) that wee maie speake, thinke, beleue, lue and departe hens,  
accordyng to the wholsome doctrine, and verities of theim. And by that  
meanes, in this worlde wee shall haue Goddes protection, fauour, & grace  
with the unspeakable solace of peace, quietnesse of conscience: and after  
this miserable life, wee shall enioie the endelesse blesse and glorie of heauen,  
whiche he graunt vs al, that died for vs all, Jesus Christe: to whom, with  
the Father & the holie Ghoste, be al honour & glorie, bothe now, and  
everlastingly. Amen.

night and day muse, and have meditation and contemplation in them. Let us ruminate, and (as it were) chew the cud, that we may have the sweet juice, spiritual effect, marrow, honey, kernel, taste, comfort and consolation of them. Let us stay<sup>1</sup>, quiet, and certify<sup>2</sup> our consciences, with the most infallible certainty, truth, and perpetual assurance of them. Let us pray to God (the only author of these heavenly meditations) that we may speak, think, believe, live and depart hence, according to the wholesome doctrine, and verities of them. And by that means, in this world we shall have God's protection, favour, and grace, with the unspeakable solace of peace, and quietness of conscience, and after this miserable life, we shall enjoy the endless bliss and glory of heaven: which he grant us all that died for us all, Jesus Christ, to whom with the Father and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, both now and everlastingly. Amen.

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<sup>1</sup> stay: *support*

<sup>2</sup> certify: *assure*